

Des Moines Memorial Park Des Moines Memorial Drive & South 156th Street Memorial Wall to World War I Veterans

Ironically, Burien's smallest park seems to have the most history.

The story of Des Moines Memorial Park is intertwined with that of Mike Kelly, Highline's first overland pioneer/homesteader, and with the many twists and turns of "his" road--Des Moines Way. But the story also embraces a World War and an ambitious living tribute to those fallen in it--a "Road of Remembrance" forever memorialized in stone. . . .

Military Road was constructed in the 1860s to help move troops and supplies north and south along the eastern shore of Puget Sound. From Military Road, the first settlers in the Highline area hacked out their own paths to their homesteads. Following the trend of staying close to a river, Jane Fenton and Mike Kelly settled with their families along the then-winding Duwamish in the South Park area, where most of the land had already been homesteaded. Initially, no one thought the hilly, heavily timbered land above and to the west would ever amount to much.

As teenagers in the 1860s, Jane and Mike went to school together in the Foster and Riverton area. In 1869, 19-year-old, redheaded Mike, who worked cutting cordwood for the Duwamish riverboats, explored the nearby "High Line" ridge, an adventure noted in his future wife's journal (a "treasure" in its own right):

"Mike took our dog and his gun and struggled up the western hillside. What a surprise he got when he finally reached the top and found a beautiful valley with two streams, huge trees, and fertile land. Right then and there he named it Sunnydale. He posted his intention to homestead by putting a stake in the ground and then hurried home to tell about the treasure he found."

Mike and Jane were married in May, 1872 and filed a claim for their Sunnydale land. Kelly was not yet 21-years-old when he filed his homestead claim but, being married, he qualified. Kelly also obtained a permit that year to build a road between the future South Park (a Duwamish River farming community now part of Seattle) and his claim. With the help of relatives and a team of horses, he began to build what soon became known as the Kelly Road. The Kellys' first baby, Phillip, was three weeks old when the couple used the new road to move to their new Sunnydale log cabin on April 1, 1873. He was the first white child in the Sunnydale area. The Kellys' second child, Mabel, was the first white child born in Sunnydale. (Many Roads, p. 92)

In the 1870s, the only means of transportation between the bustling village of Seattle and the farmers and settlers along the Duwamish River Valley, and as far south of Kent, was by small steamboat. In those days, the river held a lot more water, because Lake Washington's outlet was through the Black River, which emptied into the Duwamish at Tukwila.

The steamer was fired by cordwood, which it would pick up along the way, usually cut by settlers to earn a little extra cash. This was one of Mike Kelly's jobs. ("Percy H. Blaker Reminisces," Highline Times, Dec. 11, 1947.)

The Kellys founded the area's first school in their log cabin kitchen. Jane was the teacher; her two children and two of the neighbor's formed the student body. Later, a community of small farms developed around the Kelly homestead, and the locals built a schoolhouse beside Miller Creek. The teachers--almost always young women and by requirement unmarried--were paid extra to make a fire in the morning. The water came from the creek. Bob Gilbert, age 94, a graduate of that first Sunnydale schoolhouse, remembers making the daily treks with the other boys to replenish the cisterns.

A second wave of area-wide settlement began with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad to Puget Sound--the Northern Pacific--in 1883, surging in the late 1890s. Military and Kelly roads also attracted other settlers to mark claims and develop homes and farms to serve the hungry markets of Seattle. By the turn of the century most of the area's farmers were Japanese immigrants or their children. . . . (HistoryLink.org, SeaTac Thumbnail History, Essay 4181)

Another source tells us that, in 1873, Iowa native Mike Kelly sought a home for his wife, Jane Fenton, and their infant child. Kelly climbed the hill from the Duwamish Valley through thick forest in search of a homestead site. He found a spot he liked for a cabin in a clearing where the sun was shining, and happily declared, "This is truly a sunny dale." The name--and the Sunnydale community--were born. The approximate boundaries were 110th on the north, Des Moines on the south, Military Road on the east and Puget Sound on the west.

But Kelly first had to build a road to make the site accessible. He obtained a permit from the County to open a road between Riverton and South Park. He and his wife's stepfather, Milton Robbins, did the work. Like the Military Road, Kelly's road wound around the larger trees, while the smaller ones were cut close to the ground so that wagons could clear them. Once the new road, originally called the Kelly Road, was opened, Kelly filed his homestead claim in Olympia, choosing 160 acres near present-day South 146th and 16th Avenue South.

The Kellys proceeded to build a small three-room cabin of logs and split cedar--and most of their furniture as well. ("Burien's Early History," City of Burien's website) When their first child was three weeks old they moved, via oxen and sled, up to their new Sunnydale home. (Highline School District Chronicle, p. 1) The Kellys lived mostly off the land, some of the richest in King County, growing vegetables, raising chickens and hogs, hunting game and catching salmon. Kelly also raised hops and built a big hop house, which was sometimes used for dances. (Our Burien, p. 59)

When others heard about the Kelly homestead, they began to file claims in Sunnydale as well, using the Kelly Road as far as it went and extending it to their new claims. Homesteaders would "trade days" or even weeks with one another to help build their respective homes, barns and farms.

The Kellys raised seven children in Sunnydale. When two of their children were old enough, Jane began to teach them, along with three neighbor kids, using her kitchen as a classroom. (In 1892 the Kellys sold their Sunnydale home and moved back to South Park, where Mike was appointed as a deputy sheriff. He died in an accident in the Olympic Mountains in 1918. Jane, who was well known throughout the Duwamish area for her many community activities, died in 1931 at the age of 78. Highline School District Chronicle, p. 2)

Sunnydale, however, remained a wilderness, negotiable only via rough-hewn paths and Indian trails. The Sunnydale--or Des Moines--Road began around 1873 as a spur trail from Military Road to Kelly's homestead. (It was later extended west to Lake Burien, linking other homestead sites.) Other settlers homesteading in the Sunnydale area in the 1880s included the John Bissells, David Elseys and Alexander McEacherns. Early settlers used the "Kelly Road" to haul their produce--eggs, berries, hops, vegetables and other crops--via horse and wagon to the Pike Place Market in Seattle, and to bring back supplies from the city, an all-day and often arduous trek. It was not uncommon for local farmers to start the day at 2:30am in order to be in Seattle when the market opened. They took the Kelly Road to Riverside and barged across the river, not arriving home until 9pm that night. (Wonderful World, p. 11)

The Kelly Road was also used to carry the mail to Sunnydale. Since the nearest post office was in South Park on the Duwamish, anyone going there would bring back the mail and put it in a hollow stump near where 152nd and 16th Ave. South now meet. Whoever went to the stump to get his mail would also pick up his neighbor's. Later on, about 1888, Leah Kelly, Mike and Jane's daughter, delivered the mail by horseback, using the roads her father helped build. (Our Burien, p. 105)

One of these Sunnydale farming families were the Morasches, whose picturesque landmark home on Des Moines Road, built in 1910, was still standing in the late 1970s. Etta Miller Morasch recalls using the Kelly Road to haul their produce to the Pike Place Market in Seattle. "Getting there by buckboard was an achievement requiring considerable fortitude," as the road was winding and wide enough for only one team of horses. This "corduroy road," as the Kelly Road was called, led to South Park and eventually the ferry crossing. Coming back up the steep hill was even more difficult, Mrs. Morasch recalls, as every few feet the horses had to rest, the wagon wheels held by logs partly buried at intervals. (Many Roads, pp. 35-37)

The Des Moines, or Kelly Road, led down the hill from Sunnydale to South Park and the Black River ferry crossing. (Many Roads, p. 30) This road, also called the High Line Road (because it ran along a ridge back from the coastline), was the first to link Seattle and Tacoma, although the well-traveled route was often sorely in need of repair from the constant pounding of horses' hooves and wagon wheels.

According to Wonderful World of Woods and Water, Kelly started building a road in 1873 that linked farm to farm, connecting with Military Road on the north. The road also extended south to what is today 180th, and west until it reached the William Brown and E. Charles Gardner claims on Puget Sound. Roads from farms all around the Sunnydale area led to the Kelly Road. In 1877 the settlers petitioned King County to take over the

"Kelly Road." (p. 6)

As more people followed the Kellys to Sunnydale, the need for a school became apparent. The local men got together and built a one-room, rough-hewn log cabin overlooking Miller Creek near 160th, just east of present Des Moines Way. Ellen Burton, Jane Kelly's younger sister, was the first teacher when the school opened in 1882 to eleven children. (Highline School District Chronicle, p. 4) Ms. Burton's Attendance Book of 1882 listed Thomas and Francis Olette among her students. Their father, George Olette, was the area's first landowner, having purchased land along Burien's northern coastline and inland in 1864. (Our Burien, p. 45 and Salmon Creek Neighborhood Plan)

The "new" Sunnydale School, whose front lawn today contains Des Moines Memorial Park and Monument, was built at its present site, 15631 8th Avenue South, in 1890. The two-story, four-room school was built at the south end of the Sunnydale site. Students went to nearby Miller Creek at recess to spear fish, as the Indians did, or bring back drinking water to the school. Spawning salmon fought their way upstream from the Sound as far as Sunnydale School, and many of them were used by local settlers as fertilizer. (Many Roads, p. 45)

Until 1902, the school served all the children from White Center to Des Moines. (The Many Roads to Highline, Melba Eyler and Evelyn Yeager, 1979 Special Edition, pp. 2-3, 10 & 16-19). In 1938 this building was turned 90 degrees to become the south portion of the present Sunnydale School. There were four additions between 1928 and 1950. At one time, 685 students were enrolled at Sunnydale. The school was closed in 1981, but reopened (in the 1990s?) when elementary enrollment began to slowly increase. The same building is still in use today, with two of the original rooms on the ground floor, and two on the upper floor.

The first store on the Kelly Road was opened near Sunnydale School in 1903 by George Carter, an enterprising timber cruiser and logger in the area. The store was a great convenience for farmers in Manhattan and present-day Normandy Park. (Wonderful World, p. 9)

In 1913 Des Moines Road was the main thoroughfare between Seattle and Des Moines. Des Moines got another surge of development when the Neal brothers--former senator Mel Neal and his twin brothers, Millard and Clarence--started a bus line from Seattle to Des Moines. Riding these buses, however, was a rugged trip; they were chain-driven and only went from Des Moines to South Park. But their convenient schedule attracted many riders. By 1915 the buses went all the way to Seattle. (Timber, Tides and Tales, p. 20)

Prior to this time, most travel from Des Moines to Seattle was by boat or horse. Overland travel was fine in the summer months--but everyone had to get out and push when the roads were muddy and rutted. (Mabel Clothier recollection, Our Burien)

County Commissioner Laif Hamilton, who purchased the Kelly farm in 1891, arranged to have the Kelly Road paved with red bricks and extended all the way to Des Moines. Notoriously slippery when wet, the bricks also buckled in hot weather. Popularly known as "Hamilton's Folly," the road did, however, stimulate development of the entire area

between Sunnydale and Des Moines. It was then considered quite a feat to be able to travel by land from Seattle to Des Moines. The road today is called Des Moines Memorial Drive; the road that turned west is now Normandy Road.

By June of 1916 the Des Moines road was completely bricked over. A gala event celebrated the dedication of the new highway. In 1918 F.E. Ellington, Abner Ellington and Vic Nelson assumed management of the bus lines, which developed into the Suburban Transportation System. (Fern Carr, daughter of White Center pioneer/logger Sam Carr, married one of the Ellington brothers. White Center Remembers, p. 17)

The High Line, or Des Moines, Road remained, at the time, the shortest distance between Seattle and Tacoma. It was thought that, in the coming years as it was paved and widened from the Pierce/King County line to Tacoma, it would also be the most heavily traveled route. (Even as late as the 1930s, the only road from Seattle to the Normandy Park area "was a brick road called Des Moines Way South . . . First Avenue South was not cut through in those days." Kelly Bernard Memory, Wonderful World of Woods and Water, p. 87)

The Des Moines Road became an even more vital economic lifeline for South End farmers when Puget Sound steamers quit stopping at Des Moines in the 1920s. Steve Beinberg, Ralph Tracy, Otto Marshall, Harmon Leonard and the Ellington brothers, to name a few, formed trucking companies to haul locally grown fruit, chickens and flowers over the Des Moines Road to market in Seattle. (Timber, Tides and Tales, p. 30)

Des Moines Memorial Way was established following World War I as a living memorial to those who gave their lives in the course of the war. Within months of the end of the war, the Seattle Garden Club decided to transform a 10-mile section of the High Line Road, also known as Des Moines Road, into an American Elm-tree-lined road. The original plan envisioned the "living memorial" to extend from Seattle to Tacoma.

The Garden Club's decision, to dedicate a road and convert it into a tree-lined avenue reminiscent of those of France, arose from the desire to create a "living road of remembrance" that would both honor and memorialize men and women from Washington state who gave their lives in the recent war. (Waymarking.com)

In 1921 the Seattle Garden Club chose this meandering north-south road for a tree-planting effort to honor those Seattle-area men and women who had died in World War I. Mrs. T.C. Smith, who helped organize several local garden clubs, also contributed to "Roadside Beautification Programs" such as that begun in 1920, following World War I. Elm trees were planted on both sides of Des Moines Road as a tribute to those who died in the service of their country. The elms were planted along 11 miles of roadway, from the Seattle City limits at South Park to the Kent-Des Moines Highway. Each tree was planted in memory of a different man. This planting, believed to be the only "Memorial Lane" honoring the war dead of World War I, was initiated by the region's garden clubs and Parent-Teacher Associations.

Planting trees along Des Moines Way after the war signified the community's losses and its commitment to work for peace throughout the world. Des Moines Way represents a

type of memorial popularized throughout America shortly after World War I, inspired by the tree-lined boulevards through which American soldiers marched in the French campaigns. (Des Moines Memorial Way—Road of Remembrance, Highline Historical Society Website).

Mrs. Alexander F. McEwan, wife of a Seattle pioneer and philanthropist, headed an effort to develop an 8-mile long boulevard along the High Line Road from Des Moines to the Seattle city limits. Four-year-old elms, 8 to 12 feet high, were to be planted at intervals of 60 feet on either side of the road, creating a “living canopy” for all those who passed beneath them.

Mrs. McEwan and others in the Garden Club sent out letters and press releases that garnered support from many Seattle families and civic and veteran groups. The subscription list for trees read like a "Who's Who" of Seattle: Ezra Meeker, D. E. Frederick, Mrs. Thomas Stimson, Mrs. John Collins, Lawrence Colman, Mrs. Henry Suzzallo, William E. Boeing, Col. C. B. Blethen, Mrs. Joshua Green, Samuel Hill, Judge and Mrs. Thomas Burke, and Mrs. D. E. Skinner.

As the project gained momentum, various officials in Seattle and King County, private clubs, patriotic organizations, and local businesses became involved: The Engineers Club, Young Men's Business Club, Seattle Council of Minute Women, Summit School Class of 1922, Seattle Chapter, American Red Cross, Rainier Golf and Country Club, Women's Democratic Club, Washington Regiment of the National Guard, American Legion, VFW, Disabled American Veterans of the World War, The Sunset Club, DAR, and many more.

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1921, members of the Seattle Garden Club, led by President Lillian Gustin McEwan, planted the first 25 elm trees along Des Moines Way South, the beginning of a living memorial to "American men who gave their lives for the country during World War I." The idea of tree plantings to honor the fallen dead came from Colonel F.W. Galbraith, Jr., Commander of the American Legion. Burien Post No. 134 and Seattle Post No. 1 of the Legion helped plant and maintain the living memorial.

A dedication ceremony on Armistice Day, 1921, was held at Sunnyside School, the halfway point between Seattle and Des Moines. Then, on January 14, 1922, planting of the trees began with another dedication ceremony at the school. Present were 91-year-old Ezra Meeker, one of the last of western Washington's original pioneers, who turned the first spade of earth. Other dignitaries attending the ceremony were Governor Louis Hart, Lt. Gov. W. J. "Wee" Coyle (a veteran of the war), the Mayor of Tacoma and Brig. Gen. Ulysses Grant McAlexander. He was “The Rock of the Marne” who, as commander of the 38th Infantry, checked the German advance on Paris at the second battle of the Marne. Rear Admiral John Hoogewerff and Henry Suzzallo attended, as well as Mrs. McEwan. Gold Star Mothers, Disabled Veterans, and the Consuls of England, France, Italy, Belgium and Japan participated. Boy Scouts placed small American flags on each tree.

In his speech, Lt. Gov. Coyle said that, *“In years to come, when the young men of today are the old men of tomorrow, those elms will have come into their full strength and*

beauty, an ever present reminder of the days when the Americans of the World War marched on French highways."

This pioneer highway thus was rededicated in 1922 as Des Moines Memorial Drive when 1,432 American elm trees were planted along its shoulders to commemorate Washington state's World War I dead. Some of these trees still line the memorial highway. ([HistoryLink.org](#), [SeaTac Thumbnail History](#), Essay 4181)

In February 1922 the Seattle Ex-Service Women's Club dedicated trees along the highway to the memory of eight Seattle women "soldiers" who had died during the conflict. For example, one of the saplings, carrying a small silk American flag to distinguish it from those dedicated to the men, was dedicated to Lottie Brainerd McDonald. Mrs. McDonald had joined the Northwest Division of the Red Cross when the U.S. had declared war. While serving in Siberia, she contracted an illness and died in Shanghai. Forty members of the Ex-Service Women's Clubs concluded their ceremony with a luncheon in the tea room at the downtown Seattle YWCA, where they paid further tribute to "the women who died in the cause of freedom." ([HistoryLink.org: Des Moines Memorial Way South, Women's Memorial](#))

That April (1922), Marshal Joffre, "The Hero of the Marne" and WW I Commander of the French Army, came to the Northwest as the guest of Samuel Hill. He planted an American Elm across the road from the Sunnyside School on "The Road of Remembrance." People turned out in large numbers to see him.

The Seattle Times reported: "Along the Pacific Highway for miles between Seattle and Sunnyside, small American flags fluttered in the breeze, one on each of the thousand and more memorial elms which have been planted in memory of our state's heroes who made the supreme sacrifice...The latest tribute was paid to the heroic dead by the highest military genius of France, come here as a messenger of peace, directly from the Peace Portal at Blaine."

Funded by donations from individuals and organizations, this "living road of remembrance," completed in the spring of 1922, was unique in many ways:

- *It was one of the earliest planned "living roads of remembrance," and the first in the nation to be fully implemented--accomplished in just three years (1920-1922).
- *It was the only "living road of remembrance" following World War I to select American elms for the memorial.
- *It was one of the longest living roads of remembrance in the 1920s (10 miles).
- *It is the only living memorial designed to commemorate an individual with each tree planted.
- *It is unique that both top French generals in World War I, Foch and Joffre, traveled to King County to personally participate in dedication and tree-planting ceremonies.

*In addition to over 1,100 memorial American Elms, the original living memorial included floral plantings below the trees that commemorated the fallen, including red poppies (reference to the French Flanders Fields military burial ground), and blue forget-me-nots. (Roadofremembrance.org)

Three trees were planted in front of Sunnydale School in memory of the "Sunnydale boys" killed in the war: Thomas Hughes, Charles Anton Utz and Earl Dawes. John Hazeltine, whose family was the first to settle in Hazel Valley (the area was named after his family), also appears on the memorial. ([Our Burien](#), p. 84)

The Seattle Legion Post printed a booklet listing the names of the donors, the number assigned to the trees, the identity of the deceased for whom the tree was purchased and a brief account, if available, of the person's death. The records of these trees and the individuals they represent "afford a poignant commentary on the short but heroic lives of America's 'doughboys,'" as well as the women who died after volunteering their services--as entertainers, nurses or other support personnel--in World War I. ([Our Burien](#), pp. 86-87)

"In subsequent years, memorials were observed annually honoring all of the dead of America's past wars. According to a May 2, 1957 article in the [Highline Times](#), "Living Memorials,"

At 8:30a.m. this Memorial Day a small band of individuals will gather near Sunnydale School around three inconspicuous plaques to re-enact a ritual that has been repeated every year for nearly a quarter of a century.

Here services will be conducted, prayers said and wreaths laid in tribute to the dead of World War I. Among those in the caravan will be superior court judges, past national commanders of veterans groups and other civic leaders . . .

Towering over their heads along Des Moines Way will be tall, graceful American Elm trees adorned by the fresh green foliage of spring.

The trees which line both sides of the thoroughfare for a distance of 11 miles from South Park at Seattle's city limits to the Kent-Des Moines Highway have a significance which few but those attending the services are aware of. . . . With little urging, American Legion and V.F.W. posts, National Guard units, and, most importantly, individual residents purchased a living symbol to memorialize a departed buddy, son or daughter."

Over the next decade, the Boy Scouts maintained the trees on behalf of the Garden Club. By 1933 this responsibility had been turned over to American Legion Posts (Seattle Post #1 and Glendale--later Burien--Post #134, formed in 1935.) An ongoing committee from these Posts took over custody of the trees from the Garden Club and the Scouts. Four years later, Judson Colburn of Boulevard Park, Administrative Officer of the King County Planning Commission and a member of the Legion, joined the committee to

preserve the elms. "Chairman of the trees" for the Seattle Post was William J. "Wee" Coyle, "one of the all-time greats of U.W. football" and former manager of the civic auditorium.

Over the years, upkeep of the memorial has suffered many "trials and tribulations." Maintaining the memorial trees in the face of public apathy or ignorance was a constant struggle for the two-man committee. Each election year, Colburn had a running battle with supporters of politicians who wanted to tack their posters on the trees. ("Living Memorial," Highline Times, May 2, 1957, as reproduced in Our Burien, p. 85)

The seeds for the elm trees' uncertain future seem to have been sown in their very planting. In the rush to meet the schedule, there was apparently little system to the planting, and the trees were planted in whatever ground—topsoil or gravel—was on the spot. Not much thought was given to soil preparation, maintenance or watering, whether by adjacent property owners or concerned volunteers.

While no one could foresee the spread of Dutch Elm disease, which claimed its victims on Des Moines Way as it had elms everywhere, a number of the "blights" that plagued these trees were bureaucratic and preventable. Much of that unfolded over the next 50 years as King County adjusted itself to provide sewers, utilities and phone service to new housing and businesses and accommodate increased traffic and the expansion of SeaTac Airport. The trees lost their priority and became a continuing nuisance to the power and light companies, the County Department of Public Works and other county and city agencies.

The American Legion was expected to take charge of any legislation needed for the protection of the trees and see that they were not destroyed. In the spring of 1932, Puget Sound Power and Light notified the committee that some of the branches were interfering with their wires and they would like to have them cut. Growth of the elms was presenting problems. For a time the branches were slashed at will. In 1957, Jud Colburn negotiated an "armistice" with the companies involved, and more sensitive pruning of foliage was done, where needed, to preserve the beauty and shape of the trees. For a time, the county authorities recognized the Legion committee's jurisdiction and would not authorize removal of trees without its consent.

One of the committee's most difficult decisions was authorizing the removal of a memorial tree at the junction of Glendale Way, South 120th and Des Moines Way, planted by Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch of France during his whirlwind tour of this country in late 1921. According to Jud Colburn, "It was rammed by autos several times at that busy intersection, and it became a hazard. So I authorized its removal. After all, it wouldn't do Marshall Foch any good if someone got killed by his tree. . . . I hate to see any of the trees go, but I give permission, reluctantly, when common sense dictates."

In 1963 the County removed trees to lay a 24-inch water main from S. 160th to S. 218th Street. In 1966 the stretch of Des Moines Way from Military Road to the Seattle City limits was widened from two to four lanes. The resulting visual loss of integrity of the

boulevard was a major blow to those in the community who wanted to preserve the trees.

In the 1960s, when elm disease and increasing traffic dictated removal of some of the trees, the veterans organizations and the Seattle Garden Club worked together to replace them with the expansive pink monument in front of Sunnydale School at Des Moines Memorial Way South and South 156th Street. This site was donated by the State to the King County Parks Department. Here, a bronze bell, which was used to call children to Sunnydale School as well as warn of fire and ring for church services, had been dedicated as a historical marker in May, 1952. Harry Kittleman, then-principal of the school, officiated at the dedication. Attending were several former students, including Harry Burton, Will Dodds, Earl Elsey, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Blaker (Olive Clark), Mrs. C.O. Paul (Rae Bissell), Rose Gardiner, Howard Elsey, Walter Bissell, Grant Dunbar and Fern Dunbar Lingwood (Many Roads, p. 83.)

As for the school itself, the first Sunnydale log school house was built in 1882--the start of one of the largest suburban school districts in the nation. A new, one-room school house "with real desks" was built at the present school site in 1887. In 1892 another wing was added when enrollment reached 69 pupils. In 1904 four more rooms were added. The huge bronze bell used to call children to school--a "clear and strong clarion"--could be heard four miles away in Des Moines. It was used regularly until 1928, when it was "silenced but not forgotten." It reappeared, bright and refurbished, on May 23, 1952. A memorial service was held at the school in honor of pioneers who had helped establish the first school. Principal Harry Kittleman had the bell rebronzed and set in concrete on the front lawn of the school, where it remains today. (Quarterly Report of the Highline School District, as reproduced in Our Burien, p. 74)

Judson C. Colburn, the second post commander of Burien American Legion Post No. 134, and his committee planned a permanent memorial: an 84-foot-long wall of rose-colored, South Dakota granite with 24-foot high slabs of granite engraved with the names of 1,428 soldiers, sailors, and marines who had given their lives in World War I. The list was compiled from the donor list of trees and carved on the wall alphabetically, along with the donor's name. The centerpiece of the wall was a 5- by 6-foot granite bas-relief panel depicting the American Elm, taken from a photo of the Elm purchased in memory of the Blue Devils, the famous French regiment. The names of the women commemorated by the Ex-Service Women's Club were not included. (HistoryLink Essay)

There are other bronze plaques at the site: two to the Unknown Soldier; another noting the dedication of the Elmer Noble Memorial Tree; another commemorating the dedication of a tree to the French "Blue Devils" regiment. As of 1999, there was still no memorial to the long-forgotten female heroes to whom the ex-service women paid their own special tribute. (HistoryLink Essay: Des Moines Memorial Way South, Women's Memorial)

The dedication of the granite monument took place on September 15, 1963. Jack Jarvis, former Seattle P.I. columnist, wrote the inscription on the monument, which reads:

To perpetuate the memory of our dead of World War I, the Seattle Garden Club and

other groups planted a double row of trees along this highway. The trees were purchased by families, friends and comrades-in-arms of the dead of all services. The trees, Noble American Elms, were to remind those who stood under their protective branches of the brave men who gave their lives that we, the living, might live in peace. . . . May their memory live forever in the hearts of free men.

Each year, veterans hold Memorial Day ceremonies at the granite monument that bears all of the names originally submitted to the Seattle Garden Club, including those of a handful of women from socially prominent families.

Funds for the monument (\$17,000) were provided by Seattle City Light, Seattle City Water, Washington Natural Gas, Puget Sound Power and Light, and the King County Roads and Parks Department—all of which purchased the right to remove the memorial trees from the American Legion. While the parties involved in this compromise considered the new memorial a fitting mitigation, the community, as a group and as rightful owners of the boulevard, has insisted upon the survival and conservation of the historic trees.

Unfortunately, the stone memorial, though beautiful, is poorly sited along the roadway and has become virtually invisible to speeding motorists. It is not, and never has been, a focal point. Many Highline residents do not feel that the stone memorial is an acceptable substitute for the living trees. Since the 1970s there has been an ongoing effort to rehabilitate and restore the road to its original status. ([Des Moines Memorial Drive--Washington Historical Markers on Waymarking.com](#))

Over the years, Post 134 has replanted over 90 of the elms, thanks largely to Colburn, who has been appointed as veteran "Keeper of the Elms." ([Many Roads](#), pp. 77-78). In 1973, the historic trees won out over a proposal to widen Des Moines Road when the King County Council voted to withdraw funding in state urban-arterial funds for the project, which would have widened Des Moines Road at the expense of the trees. ([Many Roads](#), p. 106)

(Colburn, incidentally, operated the Miller Post and Pole Company with his brother-in-law Howard Miller. The company shipped cedar posts nationwide from land cleared in Normandy Park, utilizing the Burien Rail Car Line. The railroad cars at the Bunge Lumber siding (152nd and Ambaum) were also loaded with bricks used to pave Des Moines Way) ([Many Roads](#), p. 97)

Since 1963, the community has had some significant victories in preserving the memorial trees. The highway was classified a "scenic historic treasure" by the State Arts Commission. In the 1970s there were several attempts by the County to remove trees to widen various sections of the road, but in each case a citizen's task force prevented the Public Works Dept. from proceeding. Residents also stopped the Seattle Water Department from removing trees to lay water pipe south of 156th Street. Due in part to Colburn's discussions with authorities, alternate plans were suggested. A citizen's committee appointed by King County Councilman Paul Barden in 1979 succeeded in adding the word "Memorial" to "Des Moines Way," and instituted a signage program

along the entire length of the road. The road's name was changed to Des Moines Memorial Drive in 1984.

Since 1970, the development of State Routes 518 and 509, the expansion of SeaTac Airport and the increase in business parks, self-service storage, car rental agencies, and apartment buildings along Des Moines Memorial Way further eroded its integrity and attractiveness. In 1989 The University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture completed a study of the remaining American Elm trees. This study was a cooperative effort of King County, Seattle City Light and Puget Power, undertaken to help guide the future of the memorial. With the incorporation of two cities carved from sections of unincorporated King County--SeaTac in 1990 and Burien in 1993--attention has been focused on quality-of-life improvements and public features in Highline. Parks, memorials, walking paths and sidewalks are receiving new attention. And new attention is being paid to the trees and the memorial on Des Moines Memorial Way.

The cities (SeaTac, Des Moines and Burien), King County, the Port of Seattle, Puget Sound Energy, the Highline Historical Society, veterans' groups and a number of interested citizens are right now shaping the vision for regenerating Des Moines Memorial Way. A group of people convened by County Councilman Chris Vance, representing these jurisdictions and organizations, has been meeting regularly to discuss the questions above and to propose solutions. We encourage all citizens to learn more and to tell us their feelings about our Road of Remembrance.

The **Des Moines Memorial Drive Advisory Committee** was created in 2000 by an interlocal agreement between King County and the cities of Burien, Normandy Park, SeaTac, and Des Moines to advocate for preservation of the Drive and to serve as the oversight entity for preparation of this plan. In addition to the five jurisdictions, the committee includes representatives from other agencies, advocacy groups, and citizen activists dedicated to achieving memorial rehabilitation.

The Des Moines Memorial Drive Corridor Management Plan provides a framework for rehabilitation and enhancement of the "Living Road of Remembrance" established in 1921-22 honoring and memorializing men and women from Washington State who gave their lives during World War I. The original memorial, 10 miles of elm-tree-lined brick road, has undergone many changes and challenges since the 1920s. Many trees have been lost to disease, road and utility projects or improper pruning, and the remaining trees are reaching the end of their natural lifespan.

The Des Moines Memorial Drive Plan has three goals:

1. To establish guidelines for comprehensive rehabilitation, enhancement and promotion of the original living road of remembrance;
2. To comprehensively identify and document all intrinsic qualities located in the study area; and
3. To establish and implement a long-term management plan. In addition, the plan is designed to meet the special requirements of national and state scenic byway and heritage corridors programs and to provide the basis for nominating Des Moines

Memorial Drive to national, state and local historic registers.

The partner jurisdictions are currently in the process of presenting the plan to their respective Councils. The next steps required to implement the corridor management plan include pursuing "Heritage Tour Route" designation for the drive, developing a capital funding strategy and applying for grants, and incorporating the memorial rehabilitation guidelines into upcoming road projects. In 2005, King County will construct the [first road improvement project](#) (located between South 99th Street and South 128th Street) to utilize the plan's recommendations. ([Des Moines Memorial Drive: Washington's Living Road of Remembrance, roadofremembrance.org](#))

From the American Legion's list of donors to the Memorial Tree Project: Tree No. 91 – Mrs. Anna H. Yates. \$ 1.75 paid for her son, 2nd Lt. Howard Hopkins Van Voria, Co. C, 364th Infantry, 91st Division, killed Oct. 23, 1918 while locating a detachment of American troops who were cut off. He made a survey 10 days before at this place which enabled the troops to make an advance of 10 miles. Distinguished Service Cross. Tree 939 – Mrs. Jessie Noyes Chisholm entered YMCA services as entertainer in 1918. She enrolled in the Theatre League of America and traveled the "Candlelight Circuit" in France and the area of the Army of Occupation in Germany, illness forced her return home and she died soon after reaching Philadelphia. Tree 1172 – R. A. Case. \$1.75 paid for Darris Schalk, Pvt. 1st Class, Co. M, 23rd Infantry, 2nd Division. Killed Oct. 2, 1918 by piece of shell while on active duty as company runner in battle at Mt. Blanc Ridge. "The death of young Schalk occurred under very touching circumstances. My son (Sgt. Lloyd Case) and he were company runners. The officer in command gave Case instructions to hastily deliver. Pvt. Schalk, hearing the command, exclaimed, *"It's my turn Case, I'll go!"* and just as he returned he was shot, dying in a few minutes. That brave unselfish act was his last." (Highline Historical Society Website)